Split Personality of the Sovereign: The Interplay of Power within Bordering Practices of Exclusion at the Polish-Belarusian Border

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Abstract

This article compares two theoretical tools popular among migration researchers: the concept of "bare life" offered by Giorgio Agamben, and the conceptualization of border practices and security in critical border and security studies. The paper presents how Agambenian theory seems to lack proper analysis of power, which can be provided by critical theory. Also, Agamben's insufficient substantiation of resistance to exclusion should be supported by the normative critique offered by critical theorists of security. This enables proper examination of the humanitarian crisis provoked by both the Belarusian and Polish states' bordering practices in 2021 and 2022. In result, an analysis of Polish and Belarusian bordering practices through this theoretical lens suggests how the critical approach to borders and security may be useful in depicting precisely the interplay of power within a sovereign state and in researching possibilities of resistance against practices of exclusion.

Keywords: bordering practices; critical border and security studies; decision-making; exclusion; Giorgio Agamben

Introduction

Since August 2021 we have seen migrants suffering from both natural and human-made insecurities while trying to cross the border from Belarus to Poland. They fled their countries for different reasons – wars, persecutions, or deploring economic conditions, among others – and many of them trusted the smugglers or Belarusian authorities that it would be safe and easy to access the Schengen area. Instrumentalized by the Belarusian government, willing to put pressure on the EU, the migrants were being forced to enter Poland irregularly. When intercepted by the Polish Border Guard, they faced pushbacks, which meant that they were denied the possibility to effectively enter into asylum procedures. These events were reported by various humanitarian organizations (Amnesty International, 2022; Czarnota & Górczyńska, 2022; Grupa Granica, 2021; Human Rights Watch, 2021; OCHA, 2022) and the Polish Ombudsman (Rzecznik Praw Obywatelskich [RPO], 2022). Pushbacks had taken place at that border before, mostly against Chechen refugees (Górczyńska & Szczepanik, 2016; RPO, 2021; Szczepanik, 2018). However, in 2021 and 2022 they were performed not at the border crossings but in the forests, which constitutes a grave threat to the safety of the persons in question and an infringement of their fundamental rights. Importantly, it should be remembered that Polish bordering practices – understood as the "processes through which controls over mobility are attempted and enacted" (Parker & Vaughan-Williams, 2012, p. 729) – are intertwined with those performed by the EU, which assists in fortifying its borders by erecting a new Iron Curtain (Walters, 2002), while Poland remains rather a transit country: by the end of October 2021, around 9,000 migrants had passed through Belarus and Poland to Germany (Grupa Granica, 2021).

The pushbacks were contested by some parts of Polish society, especially by those who are engaged in activities of various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) dealing with migration issues as well as by local communities, politicians, artists, and even some state institutions, such as the Ombudsman. The NGOs, particularly the Fundacja Ocalenie (Rescue Foundation) and those associated in the Grupa Granica (The Border Group) coalition, actively opposed the bordering practices in question by providing direct assistance to refugees. In this paper, I argue that these contestations, similarly to earlier examples, for instance, from the Mediterranean region (Cuttitta, 2018; Youkhana & Sutter, 2017), should be understood as a challenge for the theory of Giorgio Agamben (1998), based on the conception of sovereign power "producing bare life". I present how the conceptualization of the Italian philosopher is problematic when faced with the interpretation of the bordering practices from the Polish-Belarusian border, and how more coherent research on this topic can be pursued thanks to critical border and security studies scholarship. The aim here is not to offer an exhaustive study of the practices of the government or the NGOs. Instead, I attempt to present how the bordering practices under scrutiny can

be grasped analytically. The results of this theoretical analysis can serve as a starting point for a more profound examination of the bordering practices discussed and the resistance they have faced.

The article is composed of three parts. The first one outlines the key assumptions of Agambenian theorization of exclusion, which often serves as a theoretical tool to grasp the situation of migrants (e.g. Kitiarsa, 2014; Radziwinowiczówna, 2022; Rajaram & Grundy-Warr, 2004). The following section proceeds to offer a different conceptualization of the humanitarian crisis at the border – one based on critical theory. In the third part, using data on the activities of the NGOs contesting the state's bordering practices, I compare the interpretations of this material through the lens of Agamben's theory and the theoretical framework of critical border and security studies. I conclude that the results suggest that Agamben's theorization of sovereignty is confusing because it is not based on a profound conceptualization of power. To overcome this predicament I propose to draw on the critical border and security studies framework to see sovereignty as an ideological tool in the power struggle between different actors.

Who Is the Sovereign? Giorgio Agamben's Answer and Its Predicaments

The borders of contemporary democratic nation-states involve mechanisms which often lead to situations where "codified violence borders on cruelty" (Balibar, 2002, p. 138). That cruelty is often depicted by scholars with the use of a concept proposed by the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben – the concept of "bare life", which, simply speaking, means a human being deprived of all rights and, thus, exposed to the ultimate power of the others – the power materialized in the form of sovereign power. Agamben writes that "the production of bare life is the originary activity of sovereignty" (Agamben, 1998, p. 83). According to him, sovereign power places itself outside the law because it can decide to exclude an individual who is not sovereign from the legal order. Consequently, then, the excluded person's fate depends on the will of the authorities, and such a person loses the individual, political essence but is not out of the political domain, because his or her fate is determined by political power, not nature. Thus, the excluded person takes the form of bare life in the hands of authority, the form of *homo sacer* (another popular Agambenian term; however, the difference between bare life and *homo sacer* remains unclear) – a person defenceless against others, deprived of rights according to the law. The ultimate form of exclusion, according to the Italian philosopher, could be quite intuitively found in the camps as, for instance, Auschwitz. However, nowadays even in liberal democratic countries, exclusion of *homines sacri* concerns non-citizens, e.g. in the form of pushbacks, which put the health and life of an individual in great danger.

This is the core of the Agambenian concept of "inclusive exclusion" (Agamben, 1998, p. 11), which captures the situation of persons included in the domain of law only to be excluded from the domain of rights, being "subject to the law but not objects in the law" (Salter, 2012, p. 750). This seems to be the case of those being pushed back and forth across the Polish-Belarusian border. Theoretically, human rights of these migrants are not suspended but the question remains if they can really exercise their rights.

The "codified violence", such as forced return practices, can only be applied by the sovereign power (or by a subject authorized by this power, e.g. private security agencies performing evictions), as, according to Max Weber (1946), the state keeps the monopoly on violence. In a similar vein, Agamben sees the sovereign as a rather uniform entity deciding on the fate of the others who became the subjects of its power – e.g. non-citizens on the territory of any nation-state. This simple conception seems to be an attractive tool to explain how it is possible that in the countries claiming to observe human rights and human dignity some persons are refused access to protection.

However, there are some problematic issues within Agamben's theory, such as his omission of race, repression, and resistance, as well as lack of proper elaboration of power dynamics (Aradau & Tazzioli, 2019; Lee, 2010; Whitley, 2017; Zembylas, 2010), stemming from, as I will argue, "an impoverished and ultimately illusionary understanding of the processes of political contestation and domination" (Huysmans, 2008, p. 165). I join this criticism by attempting to show how the assumption about the uniformity of sovereign power precludes understanding of resistance practices (seen as a counter-power). Namely, when some parts of the *demos* and even the state apparatus – e.g. the Ombudsman (RPO, 2022) or a court of law (Czarnota & Górczyńska, 2022 , pp. 26–27) – oppose the bordering practices of the government, then *who* excludes migrants? Is it *some part* of the sovereign, i.e. – can sovereignty be partialized somehow? Or, is the sovereign still one entity which has a split personality behaving in two different ways at the same time? Agamben draws on the definition of a sovereign offered by Carl Schmitt, which says that sovereign is "he who decides on the state of exception" (Agamben, 1998, p. 11). This starting point means that the whole Agambenian theory does not envisage any significant potential of resistance.

If one analyses the above-mentioned understanding of sovereignty one can note three crucial elements. Firstly, the sovereign is *he* (or, let it be she as well). In the past it was quite obvious – the sovereigns were mostly monarchs or dictators. However, who is this "he/she" in a liberal democracy? If one assumes that this is an abstract body of a nation who can express a common will of the majority (through elections or referenda), then what about the minority which voted against? In the case of binding laws or international agreements, the will of the minority does not count in any way because the winner takes it all. But in reality, the opposing "part of the sovereign" can resist.

Secondly, the sovereign *decides*. This seems to be a simplification of the conceptualization of power when power is presented as nothing more than the right to decide. From the point of view of critical theory, decision-making is merely one of three aspects of

power, which should be understood as not only (1) influencing one's actions through decisions, but also (2) establishing rules of decision-making, and (3) shaping one's preferences (Lukes, 2005). With that conceptualization, the sovereign power seems to be a juridical abstract of diplomatic courtesy rather than the real power to shape reality. That real power is diffused between different states, private companies, non-state actors (e.g. al-Qaeda), supranational powers (e.g. the EU), and some global "influencers" such as media or religious groups. Agambenian sovereign may truly believe that he or she decides but, in fact, the decision might be more or less visibly forced by other actors, e.g. the European Commission, foreign creditors, or rating agencies.

Finally, the sovereign decides on the *state of exception*. This is the conflation of the juridical aspect of exclusion within Agambenian theory. The state of exception means suspending "the validity of the law" (Agamben, 1998, p. 15). I do not negate that the law impacts the life of an individual, yet I argue that focusing on the legal aspect distracts from the real needs and capabilities of individuals and leads to overlooking possibilities of resistance. If the sovereign suspends "the validity of the law" in relation to a given subject, and the law is a source of rights, then that subject seems to be powerless. Without the valid law, the Hobbesian state of nature (Hobbes, 2008) is back – *bellum omnium contra omnes*. As such, then, the ultimate power – outside the law – stems, according to Agamben, from physical force. This conceptualization is, again, oblivious to the more subtle aspects of power which are depicted in the theory proposed by Lukes (2005) as shaping one's preferences; as construed by Agamben, one who is "bare life" is deprived of all agency (Aradau & van Munster, 2011, p. 111). But in reality, even in the state of exception, those who are "bare life" do not lose their ability to influence the mind(s) of the sovereign (i.e. to resist) – e.g. by gaining compassion exactly because of being in a deplorable condition. Although Agamben gives an example of "the 'imploring eyes' of the Rwandan child" (Agamben, 1998, p. 133), he does it to prove that humanitarianism depoliticizes and "produces bare life", but not that compassion can trigger resistance. This focus on exception blurs the complexity of power interplays because, as Jef Huysmans notes, "the idiom of exception […] marginalizes, and in the more radical cases, erases the societal as a realm of multi-faceted, historically structured political mediations and mobilizations" (Huysmans, 2008, p. 180). These mediations include, among others, ideas of human rights and emancipation, which can be source of rights in the same manner as formal law because the law needs to be applied, and application requires some ideas in the minds of appliers (see below the explanation of the relation of practices and social structure within critical theory).

These three predicaments of Agamben's theory make up the main conflation of his conceptualization, based on the assumed uniformity of the sovereign's body and juridical simplification of power. In the next section I will address these issues to present how critical theory can help to overcome these obstacles by offering better theoretical tools to examine pushbacks and other bordering practices leading to exclusion.

Pushbacks as Bordering Practices of Exclusion Aimed at Reproducing Power

This section elaborates on the conceptualization of pushbacks in critical border and security studies, which is a set of theoretical frameworks stemming from the Frankfurt School (see more Booth, 2007). Contrary to Agambenian focus on the juridical and uniform nature of sovereign power, the critical theory-driven approach is based on viewing all institutions as relations performed through practices. In this vein, critical border and security studies scholars tend to avoid viewing borders as static territorial features and, instead, they research how they are given meaning through practices (Côté-Boucher et al., 2014; Salter, 2012). As Parker and Adler-Nissen put it, "[t]he border may be *inscribed* territorially, but it is *manifest* in human behaviour" (Parker & Adler-Nissen, 2012, p. 782, original emphasis).

It follows that one should analyse pushbacks as social practices, which are not separate from discourse. Consequently, I consider discursive practices (speech acts, displaying images, drafting proposals for legal acts, etc.) as an example of bordering practices based on shared beliefs of a given group, i.e. on ideology (van Dijk, 1998). In this sense, the very "physical" practices of pushbacks are supported by rationale in the form of discursive practices which aim at constructing migrants in a particular way. Both of these physical and discursive practices are a manifestation of ideologies aimed at reproducing some power relations, thus, excluding others from possessing power. In the critical theory-driven conceptualization of power offered by Lukes (and presented above), ideology constitutes its third dimension – influencing the preferences of other people. If one puts practices in the centre of analysis, then one minimizes the risk of omitting important complexities of power relations.

In this sense, bordering practices in Poland should be understood as part of the broader process of securitization of migration and application of different security political technologies based on control (Jaroszewicz & Grzymski, 2021). Furthermore, scholars note that the ideology of Poland's ruling party, Law and Justice, is especially hostile towards Muslim refugees (Babakova et al., 2022; Klaus, 2020). All these elements are crucial components of the ideology which – through securitization of the figure of a young male Muslim refugee – made pushbacks (also of women and children) possible to be performed. However, research on ideology should not overlook a bodily aspect.

To make a normative critique possible, the critical understanding of power and security operates on both levels: the material (i.e. bodily) level and the ideological one. Thus, sovereignty is an interpretation of the legitimacy of one group to decide on the exclusion of the others but these decisions can be described in objectified bodily categories. In this vein, I consider pushbacks as possible to be objectified practices which intentionally lead to power reproduction, and unintentionally (but inevitably) – to serious deprivation

of migrants' needs and, therefore, to their insecurity. Importantly, within the ontology of critical theory all the social elements are dialectically mediated entanglements of the material and ideological aspects of reality (Jessop, 2005), while the material aspect is the foundation of the normative critique of exclusion offered by the critical border and security studies framework.

While Agamben does not provide a sufficiently satisfying basis for substantiating why "production of bare life" should be avoided, critical border and security studies scholars strive to establish a clear cornerstone for judging some practices on a normative ground. For instance, Rita Floyd objects to post-structuralist criticism towards universalism and elaborates on the universal human needs, which can be understood as "biologically determined necessities of life" (Floyd, 2011, p. 434). Ken Booth quotes the following words of Geoffrey Warnock:

> That it is a bad thing to be tortured and starved, humiliated or hurt is not an opinion: it is a fact. That it is better for people to be loved and attended to, rather than hated or neglected, is again a plain fact, not a matter of opinion. (Warnock, 1967, p. 60, as cited in Booth, 2007, p. 234)

Hence, the bodily aspect does not mean turning security studies into an exact science and attempting to measure human well-being in strictly biological terms. Security is understood as a basic and universal human need and it is not to be reduced to mere biological existence but can be seen as the "survival-plus" (Booth, 2007, *passim*), and the need thereof may be called "moral-psychological" and "anthropologically rooted" (Strydom, 2011, pp. 104–105). In sum, pushbacks are seen not as a legal category but as multifaceted social practices which can be assessed on biological, psychological, and moral grounds. To make that assessment, one should observe the consequences of these practices of exclusion for the persons' "survival-plus": their life, health (physical and psychological), and more widely understood well-being (possibilities to exercise liberties, to decide on their life, to work, obtain education, maintain social relations, realize ambitions, etc.). Thereby, I understand pushbacks as practices aiming to reproduce power of a given group possessing the territory and of the government securing this possession. These practices inevitably deprive persons subjected to them of their basic needs and seriously endanger their security, i.e. their "survival-plus".

Moreover, pushback practices, as all practices, need some social structure which can enable them (Jessop, 2005) and which is based on ideology, in this case – the ideology of nation-states concentrating around the concept of sovereignty. This concept provides legitimation for a particular treatment of persons who do not possess the citizenship of the state which claims the territory they stay on as its own. In this sense, sovereignty is not a kind of power but an element of "complex systems of discourse and ideologies that make (most members of) dominated groups believe or accept that domination is justified [...], natural [...] or inevitable" (van Dijk, 1998, pp. 166–167).

Only after this correction of Agambenian theory can it be understood that it was not the abstract sovereignty that "produced bare life" – it was the power of real people who were pursuing their objectives by excluding others. To reproduce that power, the persons recognized as authorized to decide on behalf of the "nation" (the government), applied bordering practices in the form of pushbacks. In turn, the ideological concept of sovereignty made many "believe or accept" that pushbacks are "justified", "natural", or "inevitable". The government and its supporters are the sovereign only after they manage to convince a sufficient number of people about their legitimacy to exercise certain practices in the name of sovereignty. At the same time, a part of Polish society may express completely different stances on sovereignty. In the next section, I will elaborate on the contestation of the state's bordering practices to explain why Agambenian theory is not able to grasp the phenomenon of exclusion in the form of the humanitarian crisis at the Polish-Belarusian border, and I will suggest possible theoretical tools to do so which are offered by the critical border and security studies framework.

Humanitarian Crisis at the Border: How the Sovereign *Really* Performs Exclusion

In this section I embark on an interpretation of the humanitarian crisis provoked by the bordering practices of the Belarusian and Polish governments. This will be done to fully explain the difference between Agamben's theory and the theoretical framework of critical border and security studies. I use data provided by humanitarian organizations and the Polish Ombudsman. These reports consist of materials published by the Polish Border Guard as well as those collected directly from migrants, activists, residents of the border area and representatives of NGOs as a result of the fieldwork carried out by their authors. With the use of these sources, three elements for further analysis have been established.

Firstly, there are migrants attempting to enter Poland irregularly from Belarus – often forced to do so by the Belarusian security services and previously misinformed by smugglers who cooperate with Belarusian authorities (Grupa Granica, 2021, p. 3; Human Rights Watch, 2021, p. 8). Secondly, when intercepted by the Polish Border Guard, in many cases the migrants are immediately sent back to Belarus without the possibility to lodge asylum claims, and then forced by Belarusians to cross to Poland again (Amnesty International, 2022, pp. 3–4; Grupa Granica, 2021, p. 3) – a practice which the migrants themselves refer to as "a game of ping-pong" (Human Rights Watch, 2021, p. 11). Some migrants stated that they had been denied the right to claim asylum despite expressing their intention to apply for protection in Poland (Amnesty International, 2022, p. 5; Grupa Granica, 2021, pp. 10, 13, 17). What is more, they were deprived of proper information and access to lawyers and interpreters (Human Rights Watch, 2021, p. 23). Thirdly, importantly for this study, there

are various actors (particularly activists engaged in NGOs or acting individually) who managed to provide assistance to migrants. These actors have undertaken numerous actions to resist the bordering practices of the government: they provided legal counselling and humanitarian aid to migrants, assisted them personally to lodge asylum claims, represented them in legal procedures, and informed public opinion about the events (OCHA, 2022). The NGOs also contest the overall response of the Polish state, accusing it of dehumanizing migrants by treating them as "pawns on a chessboard" (Grupa Granica, 2021, p. 4). The Ombudsman, in turn, referred to actions of the Border Guard as possibly "inhuman or degrading treatment", and he described the legal framework allowing for pushbacks as inconsistent with the Constitution, national statutory law, and international law that is binding on Poland (RPO, 2022).

If one attempts to approach these issues with Agambenian analytical instruments, they will face rather fatalistic explanations. The first and second points of the above description may be referred to as what the Italian philosopher calls "the production of bare life" by the sovereign power. The migrants are indeed deprived of their rights and have scarce possibilities to resist the force of border guards. The third point, however, is a serious challenge to Agamben's theory. How is it possible that the sovereign allows somebody (or some part of itself?) to resist the practices of turning the excluded persons into "bare life"? Even if one finds some (explicit or implicit) possibilities of resistance in the works of Agamben, the general conclusions are rather fatalistic. Within his theoretical framework, the actions of NGOs at the Polish-Belarusian border would be an ephemeral anomaly doomed to fail. If the sovereign is "he who decides", it implies the ultimate power of the government by definition – decision here is not only a procedural step but a real power and so it cannot be influenced by anyone.

Moreover, it should be noted that to decide on the state of exception means that this state may be declared or not. Therefore, if the actions of NGOs lead to a change of the initial decision (blocking of pushback practices), then, according to the presented analysis of Agambenian theory, the sovereign still keeps the power because he or she could decide otherwise. Within that theory one cannot find any conceptual instrument to grasp the counterpower which forced the sovereign to change the initial decision. Even if this power is observed, it cannot be profoundly analysed. If the power of the sovereign is ultimate, then the decision has been changed because that appeared to be in the interest of the sovereign. The reasons for the outcome are centred around the figure of the sovereign, and the counterpower of resisting actors is given very scarce attention, if any.

A different way of analysing this problem would be possible within the critical theory approach. If the threefold view on power (Lukes, 2005) is adopted, the actions of activists can be profoundly examined as (1) directly impacting the border guards decisions (if the representatives of NGOs are witness to possibly illegal actions); (2) establishing rules and conditions of decision-making by all actors (by providing information and support to migrants); (3) influencing the preferences of different actors (by shaping discourse

and spreading information on the topic, which can arouse compassion to migrants). With this theoretical lens one is able to abandon the assumption of the ultimate power of the sovereign and investigate the real power interplay happening at the border. This leads the analysis to question the next assumption of Agambenian theory – one referring to the uniformity of the sovereign.

If the activists can exercise power over the government, it means that some rupture in the sovereign's body appears. It is something of a split personality, as if one observed contradictory behaviour of a person. In fact, within sovereignty there is no person but different social relations composed of practices and structures. There is a widely accepted claim of governments to represent "their nations" (at least in democratic countries) but it does not turn off the power interplay of various groups of interests. If one keeps talking about a mythical "sovereign", one deprives themselves of possibilities to research the power interplay happening "inside" the sovereign's body. Agamben seems to confuse decision-makers, voters, and different groups of supporters (from activists to oligarchs). Only after depicting all actors and their power capacities can one examine the effects of the interplay of power to explain why the state behaved in a given manner – i.e. whose power prevailed.

Finally, the examination of whose power prevailed leads to asking for whose benefit the power is being exercised, which is the cornerstone of critical analysis. As Noel Parker and Nick Vaughan-Williams point out, investigating the border critically means asking "what and where borders are and how they function in different settings, with what consequences, and for whose benefit" (Parker & Vaughan-Williams, 2012, p. 729). The question about benefits is inevitably normative: the benefits have to be derived from interests, and interests – from needs; finally, the needs have to be established on certain normative grounds (cf. Lukes, 2005). Agamben does not provide any coherent normative substantiation of compassion to *homines sacri* other than intuitive common sense. On the other hand, critical theory, as argued in the previous section, attempts to establish a reasoning which allows us to assess what is done to the benefit or detriment of whom.

In sum, the activities of NGOs resisting the Polish government's bordering practices might be understood in two different ways. If one follows Agamben, one would see this as an internal conflict in the sovereign's mind, but the sovereign eventually always makes decisions. Although the category of "bare life" could seem attractive, it cannot remain unnoticed that by attributing oppressive practices to the very nature of each sovereign one not only ignores the evidence against that thesis but also overlooks all possibilities of emancipation. Another way is to abandon the notion of sovereign power and adopt an approach which views sovereignty as an ideological concept serving to reproduce power by means of practices of exclusion of others. In this way, the figure of a sovereign no longer obscures the real interplay of power between different actors, and thus the researcher gains the ability to examine their actions in their full complexity. With this theoretical lens

one can start to ask questions about who performs pushbacks and who opposes them; what capacities of power are used in both actions; which power is more likely to prevail; and finally – for whose benefit the analysed practices are performed and what academia can, therefore, recommend as a solution to that problem.

Conclusion

In this article, I have offered a theoretical framework to analyse the humanitarian crisis at the Polish-Belarusian border drawing on critical border and security studies. I compared this conceptualization with the theorization of exclusion proposed by Giorgio Agamben. Although popular among migration scholars, his theory, as I argued, is confusing because it is not based on a profound conceptualization of power. As a response to Agambenian assumptions of the uniformity of sovereign power "producing bare life", I suggested looking at activists resisting pushbacks of migrants through the lens of critical ontology of material-ideological dialectics of practices and structures, and a threefold conceptualization of power offered by critical theory. To substantiate resisting pushback practices, I proposed a normative theorization of basic human needs.

Although Agambenian theory enables a lot of valuable research on migration, it falls short of providing tools for emancipation. Challenging the theory of the Italian philosopher, by asking *who* contests the exclusion of migrants, opens new possibilities for the examination of resistance practices. If two opposing parts of the *demos* fight over the exclusion of migrants, who is the sovereign? Moreover, the *homines sacri* still possess power to, at least, arouse compassion, which can endanger the reputation of the state. Thus, the "production of bare life" can be suicidal for the modern sovereign, who needs to seek to use the ideological conceptions of not only sovereignty but also respect for human rights to survive in the global interplay of power as a legitimate actor exercising power on a given territory.

These conclusions contribute to the correction of Agamben's strictly juridical theory by including a more lifeworld aspect, which was postulated by Côté-Boucher et al. (2014). Concomitantly, limitations of such an analysis should be recognized and the results obtained should be later complemented with further studies on bordering practices in the crisis in question, e.g. to explain why the government allowed the crisis to unfold instead of looking for different solutions. Apart from the most striking practices, such as pushbacks, there are many others, often tacit, and it seems that extensive fieldwork at the border should be done to unravel what was manifested there by what kind of ideology and, last but foremost, for the benefit of whom.

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Rozdwojenie jaźni suwerena. Wzajemne oddziaływanie władzy w ramach granicznych praktyk wykluczania na granicy polsko-białoruskiej

Abstrakt

Artykuł porównuje dwa instrumenty teoretyczne popularne wśród badaczy migracji: koncepcję „nagiego życia" zaproponowaną przez Giorgio Agambena oraz konceptualizację praktyk granicznych i bezpieczeństwa w ramach krytycznych studiów nad granicami i bezpieczeństwem. Artykuł pokazuje, w jaki sposób teoria Agambena zdaje się nie umożliwiać właściwej analizy władzy, przeciwnie do teorii krytycznej. Również niedostateczne uzasadnienie przez Agambena sprzeciwu wobec wykluczenia powinno być poparte krytyką normatywną oferowaną przez krytycznych teoretyków bezpieczeństwa. Pozwala to na właściwe zbadanie kryzysu humanitarnego na pograniczu polsko-białoruskim, wywołanego przez praktyki graniczne państwa białoruskiego i państwa polskiego w latach 2021 i 2022. W efekcie analiza polskich i białoruskich praktyk granicznych z punktu widzenia wspomnianej powyżej perspektywy teoretycznej sugeruje, jak krytyczne podejście do granic i bezpieczeństwa może być przydatne w dokładnym zobrazowaniu wzajemnego oddziaływania różnych władz w suwerennym państwie oraz w badaniu możliwości oporu przeciwko praktykom wykluczenia.

Słowa kluczowe: praktyki graniczne; krytyczne studia nad granicami i bezpieczeństwem; podejmowanie decyzji; wykluczenie; Giorgio Agamben

Citation